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ABSTRACT

This report analyzes information about violent incidents involving New York City teachers during the 1989-90 school year as reported to the United Federation of Teachers (UFT). The following findings are presented: (1) there was an increase of 26 percent over 1988-89 in the number of incidents reported (3,386) and a 41 percent increase in the number of serious incidents (assaults, robberies, and sex offenses); (2) the number of incidents reported was the highest since 1980-81; (3) there was a 70 percent increase over 1988-89 in the number of staff requiring medical attention as a result of incidents; (4) every incident category showed a double digit increase over 1988-89, except that of criminal mischief, which increased 5.4 percent; (5) special education schools and middle schools showed the greatest increases in incidents over 1988-89; (6) the number of schools rated as "unsafe" increased by 79 percent and those schools accounted for 56 percent of the total incidents reported; and (7) the number of times that teachers called the police increased by 68 percent over 1988-89. Recommendations for improving school safety are included. Statistical data are presented in 12 tables. (FMW)

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REPORT OF THE SCHOOL SAFETY DEPARTMENT FOR THE 1989-90 SCHOOL YEAR

United Federation of Teachers

Sandra Feldman
President

Edward Muir
Director
School Safety Department

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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October 3, 1990

Ms. Sandra Feldman
President
United Federation of Teachers
260 Park Avenue South
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Dear Sandy:

Attached is the report of the School Safety Department for the 1989-90 school year. We had more incidents than any year since the 1980-81 school year. Not only was there an increase in numbers but also in severity. Many more members required medical attention.

Staff in special education schools were especially hard hit. In fact, a special education school had the most incidents with over a third of the staff victimized.

Hopefully, the Chancellor's Taskforce on student discipline and security will point the way to some solutions. We have made several recommendations which if implemented should improve matters.

Thank you for all your support.

Fraternally,

Edward Muir
Director
School Safety Department

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Acknowledgments

I would like to thank those who assisted in the efforts of the school safety department and also the members of the school safety committee. They are James Baumann, June Feder, Shelia Laval-Freidman, Sheila Gutter, Fern Lowenfels, and Joel Shiller.

Special thanks to Elsie Carlo-Gonzalez, department secretary and to Reggie Tovbin of the UFT's data processing department who assisted in the preparation of the report.

Thanks also to Neill Rosenfeld of the communications department who helped edit the report and Barbara Freifeld, a teacher at PS 265 K who constructed several of the tables.

Edward Muir

OVERVIEW

Both the number of incidents involving UFT represented staff and the severity of those incidents increased in the 1989-90 school year.

- There is a 26% increase in incidents. The actual number reported, 3,386, is the highest since the 1980-81 school year. Serious incidents (assaults, robberies, sex offenses) increased 41% from 774 last year to 1,093 this year.

- There is a 70% increase in the number of staff requiring medical attention as a result of incidents, 756 this year compared to 444 in 1988-89. This includes 57% more members who required emergency room treatment and hospital care, 184 this year, compared to 117 in 1988-89.

- Every incident category showed a double digit increase with the exception of criminal mischief which was up 5.4%. Each Division showed a double digit increase, the greatest being special education schools and middle schools, 71% and 32% respectively.

- There is a 79% increase in the number of schools rated unsafe, 140 this year, 78 last year. The 140 schools account for 1,899 incidents or 56% of the total.

- UFT members called the Police 408 times, up from 242 last year for a 68% increase.

Gunshots

There is much to be alarmed about concerning the data in this report. However, we wish to call particular attention to a growing, life-threatening menace - the increasing number of incidents involving guns fired into schools from the streets or nearby buildings. We received 20 such reports including one case in which, one of our members was grazed by a bullet. If this problem is not dealt with, a staff member or a student is going to be killed. This is added to the mounting danger of students bringing guns and other weapons into schools.

Special Education Schools

These schools are charged with providing education for children who have a great variety of problems that are physical, emotional, intellectual, or a combination of all three. One could reasonably expect a higher incident rate in special education schools. However a 71% increase is not, by any definition, reasonable.

Moreover, 58% or 303 out of the 518 total incidents reported in this division resulted in injuries. This is a higher percentage than in other divisions.

Assaults by Division

Assault, (physical attacks which cause injury) is an incident category of great concern to us. This past school year there were 1,036 such incidents systemwide, a 41.7% increase over the year before. However, the rate of increase is not the same for all divisions. In elementary schools, assaults were up by 38.4%; in the middle schools, up by 49.5%; in special education schools up by a staggering 89.6%. In contrast, assaults against high school teachers rose only 3.2%. Overall, high school incidents are up by 14.7%.

Why is the rate of increase in assaults on high school staff so much lower than that in other divisions? We think the reason is clear. A new high school discipline policy introduced in 1989 called for expulsion for up to one year for those who attacked teachers. (actually placement in an alternative school). Clearly, the message got around - attack a teacher and there are real consequences.

In May, the State Commissioner of Education nullified the policy on technical grounds. In his decision he states that perhaps attacks on teachers are not sufficient grounds for such measures. We beg to differ.

Unsafe Schools

Schools rate as unsafe according to the total number of incidents they have. In high schools it's 20 or more incidents; in middle and special education schools, 10 or more; and in elementary schools 5 or more.

We have refined that standard to include schools with 4 or more serious incidents (assaults, robberies, sex offenses). Ninety nine schools reported 4 or more serious incidents, for a total of 631 incidents. In 1988-89, 50 schools were in this category and reported 301 incidents. This represents a 98% increase.

Where, When and Who

We analyzed a sample of 930 incidents to see where in the school they occurred: 31% were outside of the building (in the school yards or on the street); 25% occurred in classrooms; 25% in halls. The other locations, listed in decreasing order, are: offices, stairs, lobbies, exits, gymnasium.

The worst months were March and May, with 498 and 417 incidents, respectively. Only September, April and June had fewer than 300 incidents.

Students are responsible for 67.6% of the incidents. The next highest group was "unknowns or unidentified" with 25.5%. Intruders were the reported perpetrators in 4.5% of the incidents. However, intruder-related incidents accounted for some of the most severe injuries and the most severe psychological trauma.

Reporting

The reporting procedures of the School Safety Department are computerized. Reports come from Chapter leaders and from the Board's Division of School Safety. The system is designed to prevent double entry and so there is no double count.

Progress

In the midst of the disturbing data which shows a staff very much at risk, we see some progress. Chancellor Joseph Fernandez has created an inter-disciplinary task force to overhaul safety provisions and discipline policies. The UFT recommended this in a May consultation.

Also at our suggestion, the Chancellor has agreed to establishing a small working group with special expertise to go into high incident schools to propose solutions.

The Chancellor has also put together priority repair teams in the division of school facilities. These teams will concentrate on security related repairs such as inter-com phones, public address systems, locks and doors.

The metal detector pilot program has been very effective not only in keeping weapons out of schools but also in lowering incident rates in most of the participating schools.

The Chancellor has made a committment to go forward with the electro-magnetic door program. These state of the art doors do keep intruders out of schools.

Joint Board/UFT discussions are ongoing with the Police Department on ways to increase police presence around high incident schools.

Discussions are being conducted with the Department of Transportation in order to improve the parking situation for many schools. School parking is related to a host of safety and security concerns. President Feldman has been involved in both Police and Transportation negotiations.

The Victim Support Program, a joint Board/UFT venture has been an outstanding success. Well over 100 of our most serious cases were helped with psychological support and practical assistance such as interventions with Police and Courts. In all, more than 1500 victims were contacted and offered assistance. A report on their activities is available.

Recommendations

1. Overhaul discipline codes and suspension regulations on all levels. Experience in the high schools demonstrates that firm action is effective.

2. Review and revamp special education disciplinary policy and practices in light of Honig vs. Doe and other court decisions which preclude expulsion and suspensions for acts which are in the scope of handicapping conditions.

3. Explore new staffing components for some special education schools. A crisis intervener and preventer who will be trained in skills of crisis prevention and also in techniques of safely restraining violent and out of control individuals.

4. A one year moratorium on police involvement with educational programs and the assignment of those officers to regular police duties at high crime schools.

5. Complete the security staffing of elementary and special education schools.

6. Expand the Victim Support Program. There are indications that more help is needed for timely outreach. Research shows that the quicker the intervention, the more effective the help and the more rapid the return of injured staff to work.

Tables

The following twelve tables are presented to show the dimensions of the problem. They also provide comparisons to the last school year and in some cases to prior years in order to display trends and to provide context.

The information collection and presentation processes were developed in cooperation with the UFT's data processing department.

TABLE I

TEN YEAR TREND IN REPORTED INCIDENTS
INVOLVING PERSONS REPRESENTED BY THE UFT

YEAR	TOTAL	# CHANGE	% CHANGE
1980	3,534	-141	- 4%
1981	2,730	-804	- 22%
1982	2,995	+263	+ 9%
1983	2,963	- 32	- 1%
1984	2,832	-131	- 4%
1985	2,972	+141	+ 5%
1986	2,673	-299	- 9%
1987	2,549	-124	- 5%
1988	2,684	+135	+5.3%
1989	3,386	+702	+26.2%

TABLE II

REPORTED INCIDENTS/THREE-YEAR COMPARISION

MOST CURRENT YEAR: 1989

DIVISION / YR	ASLT	HARS MENT	LRCY	DISO COND	ROBY	SEX OFFC	MENA CING	CRML MSCF	RECK- ENDR	OTHR	TOTAL
ELEMENTARY	292	318	269	46	28	3	13	69	109	16	1163
1988	211	325	223	17	16	3	13	89	93	9	999
1987	192	246	273	21	29	2	15	47	50	19	894
MIDDLE SCHOOLS	314	274	73	31	6	3	19	35	113	5	873
1988	210	241	63	13	8	2	19	30	64	10	660
1987	158	186	76	14	7	5	13	28	75	12	574
HIGH SCHOOLS	191	304	113	18	8	4	19	65	96	8	826
1988	185	226	109	19	9	2	16	46	103	5	720
1987	154	248	136	20	8	2	23	103	107	21	822
SPECIAL ED	237	140	23	33	2	2	18	8	53	2	518
1988	125	110	14	9	1	2	4	3	32	3	303
1987	117	52	26	12		1	13	3	30		254
HEADQUARTERS	2				1				2	1	6
1988			2								2
1987	1		1		2				1		5
TOTALS	1036	1036	478	128	45	12	69	177	373	32	3386
1988	731	902	411	58	34	9	52	168	292	27	2684
1987	622	732	512	67	46	10	64	181	263	52	2549

TABLE III

NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF INCIDENTS FROM 85-86 TO 89-90

	NUMBER					PERCENTAGE				
CATEGORY	85-86	86-87	87-88	88-89	89-90	85-86	86-87	87-88	88-89	89-90
ASSAULT	732	631	623	731	1,036	24.7	23.6	24.4	27.2	31.1
HARASSMENT	1168	975	735	902	1,036	39.4	36.5	28.7	33.6	30.6
LARCENY	578	568	514	411	478	19.5	21.2	20.1	15.3	14.1
DISORD. COND.	9	22	67	58	128	0.3	0.8	2.6	2.2	3.8
ROBBERY	81	38	46	34	45	3.0	1.4	1.8	1.3	1.3
SEX OFFENSE	11	9	10	9	12	0.4	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.4
MENACING	60	61	64	52	69	2.0	2.3	2.5	1.9	2.0
CRMNL. MISCHF.	148	142	181	168	177	5.0	5.3	7.1	6.3	5.2
RECK. ENDGRMNT.	134	197	263	292	373	6.0	7.4	10.3	10.9	11.0
OTHER	40	30	52	27	32	1.4	1.1	2.0	1.0	1.0
TOTAL	2961	2673	2555	2684	3386					

TABLE IV

TOTAL INCIDENTS

BY DIVISION

DIVISION	1988-89	1989-90	#-CHANGE	%-CHANGE
ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS	999	1,163	164	16.4
MIDDLE SCHOOLS	660	873	213	32.3
HIGH SCHOOLS	720	826	106	14.7
SPECIAL EDUCATION	303	518	215	71.0
HEADQUARTERS	2	6	4	200.0
TOTALS	2,684	3,386	702	26.2

TABLE V

NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF INCIDENTS
BY DIVISION FROM 88-89 to 89-90

	NUMBER		PERCENTAGE	
DIVISION	88-89	89-90	88-90	89-90
ELEMENTARY	999	1163	37.2	34.3
JH/IS	660	873	24.6	25.8
HIGH SCHOOL	720	826	26.8	24.4
SP. EDUCATION	303	518	11.3	15.3
HEADQUARTERS	2	6	0.1	0.2
TOTAL	2684	3386		

TABLE VI

TOTAL INCIDENT COMPARISON

INCIDENT-TYPE	1988-89	1989-90	#-CHANGE	%-CHANGE
ASSAULT	731	1,036	305	41.7
HARASSMENT	902	1,036	134	14.9
LARCENY	411	478	67	16.3
DISORD COND	58	128	70	120.7
ROBBERY	34	45	11	32.4
SEX OFFEN.	9	12	3	33.3
MENACING	52	69	17	32.7
CRMNL MCHF	168	177	9	5.4
RECK ENDGR	292	373	81	27.7
OTHER	27	32	5	18.5
TOTALS	2,684	3,386	702	26.2

TABLE VII

SERIOUS INCIDENTS BY DIVISION

	ASSAULT		ROBBERY		SEX.OFF		TOTALS		# CHG	% CHG
DIV.	88	89	88	89	88	89	88	89		
ELEM.	211	292	16	28	3	3	230	323	+ 93	+ 40.4%
JH/IS	210	314	8	6	2	3	220	323	+ 103	+ 46.8%
H.S.	185	191	9	8	2	4	196	203	+ 7	+ 3.6%
SP. ED.	125	237	1	2	2	2	128	241	+ 113	+ 88.3%
HDQTR.	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	3	+ 3	-
TOTAL	731	1036	34	45	9	12	774	1093	+ 319	+ 41.2%

TABLE VIII

INCIDENTS BY MONTH

DIV.	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	TOTAL
ELEM.	82	118	103	131	134	132	160	73	146	84	1,163
JH/IS	39	92	83	82	86	127	138	57	120	49	873
H. S.	52	100	132	110	70	66	100	60	94	42	826
SP.ED	25	44	58	47	67	58	99	28	57	35	518
HDQTR	0	2	0	0	1	0	1	2	0	0	6
TOTAL	198	356	376	370	358	383	498	220	417	210	3,386

TABLE IX

INJURY BY DIVISION

DIV.	NONE	MINOR	DOCTOR	EMERG.RM	HOSP.TMT	TOTAL
ELEM.	763	203	155	19	23	1,163
JH/IS	457	182	183	23	28	873
H. S.	548	115	114	19	30	826
SP.ED	215	144	119	9	31	518
HDQTR	2	1	1	0	2	6
TOTAL	1,985	645	572	70	114	3,386

TABLE X

VICTIM-SEX BY DIVISION

SEX	ELEM.	JH/IS	H. S.	SP.ED	HDQTR	TOTALS
FEMALE	957	459	359	290	4	2,069
MALE	206	414	467	228	2	1,317
TOTALS	1,163	873	826	518	6	3,386

TABLE XI

PERPETRATOR TYPE BY DIVISION

DIV.	STUDENT	SP.ED	PARENT	INTRUDER	UNKNOWN	TOTALS
ELEM.	460	115	71	79	438	1,163
JH/IS	504	176	2	51	140	873
H. S.	460	102	2	18	244	826
SP.ED	0	472	3	6	37	518
HDQTR	0	0	0	0	6	6
TOTAL	1,424	865	78	154	865	3,386

TABLE XII

COMPARISON OF CRIME CATEGORIES BY DIVISION

FOR ALL MONTHS

FOR DIVISION : ELEMENTARY

INCIDENT-TYPE	1988-89	1989-90	#-CHANGE	%-CHANGE
ASSAULT	211	292	81	38.4
HARASSMENT	325	318	-7	-2.2
LARCENY	223	269	46	20.6
DISORD COND	17	46	29	170.6
ROBBERY	16	28	12	75.0
SEX OFFEN.	3	3	0	0.0
MENACING	13	13	0	0.0
CRMNL MCHF	89	69	-20	-22.5
RECK ENDGR	93	109	16	17.2
OTHER	9	16	7	77.8
TOTALS	999	1,163	164	16.4

FOR DIVISION: MIDDLE SCHOOLS

INCIDENT-TYPE	1988-89	1989-90	#-CHANGE	%-CHANGE
ASSAULT	210	314	104	49.5
HARASSMENT	241	274	33	13.7
LARCENY	63	73	10	15.9
DISORD COND	13	31	18	138.5
ROBBERY	8	6	-2	-25.0
SEX OFFEN.	2	3	1	50.0
MENACING	19	19	0	0.0
CRMNL MCHF	30	35	5	16.7
RECK ENDGR	64	113	49	76.6
OTHER	10	5	-5	-50.0
TOTALS	660	873	213	32.3

FOR DIVISION: HIGH SCHOOLS

INCIDENT-TYPE	1988-89	1989-90	#-CHANGE	%-CHANGE
ASSAULT	185	191	6	3.2
HARASSMENT	226	304	78	34.5
LARCENY	109	113	4	3.7
DISORD COND	19	18	-1	-5.3
ROBBERY	9	8	-1	-11.1
SEX OFFEN.	2	4	2	100.0
MENACING	16	19	3	18.8
CRMNL MCHF	46	65	19	41.3
RECK ENDGR	103	96	-7	-6.8
OTHER	5	8	3	60.0
TOTALS	720	826	106	14.7

FOR DIVISION: SPECIAL EDUCATION

INCIDENT-TYPE	1988-89	1989-90	#-CHANGE	%-CHANGE
ASSAULT	125	237	112	89.6
HARASSMENT	110	140	30	27.3
LARCENY	14	23	9	64.3
DISORD COND	9	33	24	266.7
ROBBERY	1	2	1	100.0
SEX OFFEN.	2	2	0	0.0
MENACING	4	18	14	350.0
CRMNL MCHF	3	8	5	166.7
RECK ENDGR	32	53	21	65.6
OTHER	3	2	-1	-33.3
TOTALS	303	518	215	71.0